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THE LAST TEN MINUTES

BY HAZEL L. JENNINGS

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“OH, dear! It’s ten minutes of seven and here comes a new patient.” It had been a very busy day on Ward B. and Grace Emerson’s pretty face wore a slight frown as she looked down the corridor and observed the office attendant bringing a new patient to her floor. She had scarcely realized that she had spoken aloud until one of her fellow nurses told her, “Room 12 is ready for her, Miss Emerson.” “Thank you. You run along now,” Grace told her, “because I know you are going out tonight.”

“This way,” Grace said to the new patient, as the attendant handed her the admission card. She led the way to the room, which was very clean and looked rather severe and uninviting in the gray twilight, but Grace did not notice this. She was in a hurry to get her patient admitted and to finish her other duties. She glanced at the card in her hand and noticed that the patient had been sent in by Dr. G—— for an operation the following morning.

“Here is the closet. I’ll hang your things away, Mrs. Richards. Yes, you had better go to bed. Dr. G—— always wants his patients to go to bed as soon as admitted. Just let me take your temperature, please.” Grace worked swiftly and the patient was soon in bed. “If you want anything, you can call the night nurse. She will be in later to give you some medicine. Yes, your husband can come in now. I’ll call him.” With a sigh of relief, Grace hurried from the room. She called Mr. Richards from the waiting room, finished her other duties, and had soon joined the other nurses in the “home.”

“Here’s a letter for you, Grace,” called Evelyn Thompson, a light haired, rosy cheeked girl, who admired Grace immensely and was always following her about.

“Thank you, Eve. Its from Mother.”

Grace sat down in one of the cosy chairs and opened her letter.

Dear Grace: I got your letter today and I’ll send the dress you want this afternoon after I have changed the band on it so it will be all ready to wear. I am also sending some jelly, a cake, and some good things to eat so you can have a “spread.” Your father and I expect to drive over a week from Friday for the week end and we can have a good visit then.

Your Aunt Ellen has had an operation and is getting along very nicely. I didn’t want to tell you until it was all over with because I thought you would worry. Everything was fine, but Grace, dear, why can’t some of the nurses learn to be a little more thoughtful? When we went to the hospital, a girl from the office took us to the floor where Aunt Ellen’s room was. A very trim nurse, who

reminded me of a perfectly working piece of machinery, nodded to us to indicate that we were to follow her. She helped Aunt Ellen undress without comment, took her pulse and temperature, and told her if she wanted anything to call a nurse. Of course, it is routine work for the nurse, but for your aunt, who had never been in a hospital before, it was a very momentous occasion. A little word of encouragement from one who sees operative cases every day, would have helped so much. We had driven in and it was very cold. A hot drink, while not really necessary, would have been very much appreciated, for we hadn't any idea whether she could have a little lunch that night or not. While I was out in the corridor in search of the bath room, so I could tell Aunt Ellen where it was, the nurse had come to take her rings, money, etc., to put them in the safe, and I found her crying because she had never had her wedding ring off before. After I had her quieted, I went down to the office to inquire about visiting hours, telephone messages, etc. When I got back it was after seven and the night nurse had come on duty. I liked her as soon as I saw her. She had dark hair and twinkling blue eyes. It wasn't long before she came in with some medicine. "This doesn't taste very good," she said, "so we'll get it over with as soon as possible." She stopped to talk a minute or two, and told us, "I had a patient recently, who had the same operation you are going to have, Mrs. Graham, and she is getting along beautifully. Don't worry. You'll be so much better after it is over. I'll get you a glass of water and a blanket and if you want anything before I get back, just push this little button," indicating a little call bell. "I'll be in again in a little while."

After the nurse had gone, Ellen told me to go home, because she knew that the night nurse would be good to her. She had taken a great fancy to her and I promised to come up early in the morning, and started home. On the way out I met the nurse, and she said "Good night," and told me I mustn't worry, because my sister would surely get along nicely and that they would take good care of her. She certainly did her part in taking good care of Aunt Ellen after the operation. She seemed to know just where a pillow or a little rubbing with alcohol would help to relieve the pain and Ellen certainly adores her.

I must stop now, dear. Your father is waiting to take this to mail. I'll just take time to add that I'm thankful that you chose nursing and that I'm very proud to know that my little girl is the kind of nurse whom the patients will all love.

Love and lots of kisses.

MOTHER.

Grace sat very still after she had read the letter. Two big tears were standing in her eyes. She had failed her patients and she had betrayed the trust which her mother had placed in her. With a sudden determination she decided to go back on her floor and see her new patient. She walked softly into the room and found her crying quietly. Going up to the bed, Grace laid her hand on Mrs. Richards' shoulder and explained in rather a shaky voice that she had been thinking about her and had come back to see if there were anything she wanted.

"Why, bless your heart, child," exclaimed Mrs. Richards, "that is awfully good of you, and here I was thinking nobody here cared whether the patients live or die. I guess I'm silly to cry, but I'm just

a little worried about tomorrow. There's no one to look after my children if I shouldn't come through all right." Grace explained to Mrs. Richards that since her general condition was good, there seemed to be no reason why she shouldn't stand the operation very well. She talked with her for a few minutes until the patient told her that she was getting sleepy and would go to sleep immediately in order to be well rested. As Grace was leaving, Mrs. Richards told her, "You don't know how much you have helped me, Miss Emerson. I feel lots better about tomorrow, and I'll try not to worry a bit. I hope when my little girl grows up that she will train and become as fine a nurse as you are."

Grace walked slowly back to the "home" and joined some of the girls who were having a "spread." "What's happened, Gracie?" asked one of the girls. "You look as if some one had presented you with a hundred dollars."

"It was better than that," replied Grace with a happy little laugh, although there was a suspicion of tears in her eyes.

OCCUPATION THERAPY IN HOSPITALS¹

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IN order briefly to give an idea of occupation therapy in hospitals, its aims and ideals, and its reason for being, I will take up the subject under six headings.

FIRST.—THE PRESENT DEMAND FOR TEACHERS. This comes in from hospitals and clinics of all sorts. Probably because the Walter Reed is a general hospital, we get mostly requests for aides who are qualified to take charge of curative work shops. Teachers are wanted for work in psychopathic, tubercular, orthopedic, peripheral nerve, amputation, general hospitals, for work in clinics and dispensaries, for work in state institutions for chronic cases, industrial schools, reformatories, and almshouses, work for waiting mothers in maternity hospitals, in coöperation with district nurses, and in schools and camps where hand work is considered as important as book learning. Judging by the fact that I frequently receive a second letter from the same person, asking for more names of aides, I conclude that the demand is far greater than the supply.

¹ Read at a meeting of the District of Columbia League of Nursing Education.